

Township of Russell Public Library



Strategic Plan

Final Report

April, 2013

The Township of Russell Public Library Strategic Plan

A Message from the Chair and CEO

In 2012 the Library Board and staff initiated a strategic planning process to identify a future for our Library and to describe our priorities for service improvement and expansion. In recent years the Township of Russell Public Library has made a number of major improvements, most notably a new branch in Russell, and we will build on this success. We enjoy considerable community support and we are proud of our strong relationship with our users. However, we also recognize the Library must change to continue to serve our community.

Our community is changing in ways that will have a profound effect on the public library. Some of these changes, such as rapid population growth and a changing social and economic profile, are specific to the Township. Other changes are rooted in new technologies and changing lifestyles with significant implications for all public libraries that educate, inform and engage the community. During the next few years we will embrace these changes and continue to position the Library as an essential part of the Township's future.

In creating the Strategic Plan, the Public Library Board and Library staff were guided by the changes in our community and the trends affecting public libraries. We were also strongly influenced by what we heard from our residents. We conducted an extensive survey of our users and non-users and formed two community committees to work with us throughout the planning process. This input was a guiding force in the preparation of our strategy for the future of the Library.

Our Strategic Plan is focused on four strategic pillars:

- The community builds the Library – the Library builds the community
- Experience-based services
- Strategic communication
- Stimulating and welcoming spaces.

The Public Library Board and staff are committed to implementing these strategies and pursuing our Vision for the Library. The Strategic Plan describes how we will work with the community, Municipal Council and other stakeholders to ensure the Library remains a vital and essential part of our changing community.

Sincerely,

Diane Ellis
Board Chair

Claire Dionne, Prof. Lib.
Library CEO

Our Library Today



The Library has always reflected the geographic and linguistic character of the community. Branches have been maintained in both the major population centres of Russell and Embrun which reflect the predominantly English and French nature of these communities. Funding was secured in 2010 for a new branch in Russell while the Embrun Branch was moved to a primary school in 2011. The Library Board remains committed to building a strong library system that effectively serves our bilingual community. This must be reflected in a system-wide commitment to bilingual services delivered from facilities, both physical and virtual, that meet contemporary standards.

Current users are very satisfied with the services that are provided and are very supportive of the Library. However, in discussions with library users it was apparent that many do not fully understand the services available from the Library and do not take full advantage of all that is offered. In addition, more than one-third of residents do not currently use the Library's services. These non-users are not dissatisfied with services; they simply don't see the Library as an important part of their lives.

Finally, it seems that many residents, including current Library users, have a very traditional view of the public library. They largely associate the library with print material and see it primarily as a service for recreational readers and those in school. With this Strategic Plan, it is hoped that a larger percentage of residents, both library users and non-users, will fully appreciate the wide range of services that are offered and understand the significant contribution the Library can make to the social and economic success of our community in a rapidly changing world.

OUR LIBRARY

- Branches in Russell and Embrun provide 7,000 sq. feet of space and serve close to 50,000 visitors each year.
- Circulation, visits and participation in library events have steadily increased over the past 5 years.
- Website visits in the period 2008-2011 grew by close to 100%.
- A significant majority of our users report high levels of satisfaction with current library services.
- Improvements requested most often focused on operating hours, meeting and programming space, collections and marketing. Users of the Embrun Branch expressed significant dissatisfaction with their library.
- The Embrun Branch does not meet provincial standards and this is reflected in lower levels of use and less satisfaction among users.
- Non-users represent at least 40% of the population and are not motivated to use the library. For over two-thirds of non-users, the library is not "top of mind".

Our Changing Community



We are proud of our strong reputation among Township residents and remain committed to maintaining and enhancing services in the future. To do this, the Library must keep pace with our changing community.

The Township will experience significant growth in the next 20 years and this will place added pressure on the Library to meet the demands of the community. Furthermore, planning must accommodate new users as our population grows, becomes more diverse and reflects new lifestyles. The challenge will be to embrace the opportunity presented by growth to improve services and to make changes that reflect the needs of the next generation of Township library users.

Bilingualism is one of our greatest community assets and the Library must continue to nurture the French language and culture.

There are other unique characteristics of our community that will help to define how the Library approaches service delivery in the future. Being a community of commuters presents special challenges in building a community of users. The Township's economic base and employment opportunities are expanding, and the Library can support these developments.

Perhaps most importantly, the residents we spoke to during the strategic planning process repeatedly emphasized that they chose to live in the Township of Russell because of the quality of life, social connections and sense of community. The Library has an important role to play in building relationships among all people in the Township – recent arrivals and long-time residents, French and English, from the youngest to the oldest resident.

OUR COMMUNITY

- Population growth of a minimum of 35% and as much as 100% is projected for the period 2011-2031.
- Our population will continue to have higher levels of income and education than provincial averages which suggests higher levels of library use.
- The proportion of our population born in Canada (94% in 2006) will decline in the future resulting in greater cultural and linguistic diversity.
- The proportion of our population reporting French as their mother tongue (45% in 2006) will likely decline.
- Our community will have an age profile that is younger than many other communities, but includes both families with young children and older adults.
- The Township's economic development strategy calls for a more diversified economy and more local employment.

Our Changing World



New technologies and shifting social and political values will have a major impact on the future delivery of library services. These shifts represent challenges but also unparalleled opportunities to engage a wider range of residents and make a much greater contribution to our community. Through technology, the Library will connect with our youth on their terms. Support will also be offered to local businesses and those seeking employment in a global, knowledge-based economy.

The Library must continue to respond to the changing lifestyles and interests of our residents. We can support these residents by providing the life skills and competencies that they need to fully participate in a changing world. Through stronger relationships with community organizations and new partnerships, the Library will link residents to the experiences that define their world in the 21st century.

Ultimately, the Library will make a positive difference in the community by supporting community organizations; building networks; facilitating learning and actively participating in the affairs of the community. The Library will be a welcome and valued resource to all residents charting a new course in an evolving world.

TRENDS

- Canadians spend more time on-line than watching TV and most people regard access to the Internet as a fundamental right.
- Mobile technologies will become ubiquitous and social networking and social media will dominate the ways in which we communicate
- Consumer behaviour will increasingly be characterized by experience consumption rather than material consumption.
- Despite these trends, there will be continuing constraints – both financial and skill-related - to full participation in technology and the services it can offer.
- The economic base will shift with growing emphasis on the service sector and small and entrepreneurial businesses.
- Home schooling is expected to increase in popularity; technical literacy will be essential for social and economic success; and the workplace will increasingly emphasize technology for efficiency, collaboration, and global communication.
- Distinct generational lifestyles (Zoomers, Millennials etc.) rooted in differing values and characterized by different expectations, needs and behaviours will be the norm.

Our Vision for the Future

The Vision describes the Township of Russell Public Library in 2022. It is written in the present tense to describe the Library as it will be at that time. The Vision retains all that we value and believe is positive about the Library today, but also describes the ways in which it will be different to serve the changing needs of the community.

The Library is the centre of the community, providing welcoming and stimulating spaces where residents come together to share their rich history and culture, celebrate and experience the present and shape and explore the future.

The Library is an innovative and proactive resource where people of all ages and interests can learn, connect, create and enrich their lives.

The Library is well used, supported and highly valued for its contribution to the social, economic and cultural vibrancy of the community.

The Library builds community by encouraging dialogue among residents, nurturing the linguistic and cultural diversity of the community, creating and showcasing local content and resources and working closely with the Municipality and a wide range of local partners. By participating actively in the development and delivery of programs and services, residents are a driving force in building a library which remains relevant to their lives.

Our Mission

The Township of Russell Public Library promotes the communication of ideas, develops informed citizens and enriches the cultural and intellectual lives of the people of Russell Township.

Our Values

Community Connectedness

To enhance library services through effective partnerships and consultation with the community.

Customer-Driven Services

To create a strong service culture and provide quality customer-driven services.

Bilingualism

To provide a strong bilingual context in English and in French for our resources and services.

Literacy & Life-long Learning

To encourage and nurture the joy of reading in people of all ages and to promote literacy and life-long learning.

Accessibility

To provide barrier-free facilities, resources and services.

Creativity & Innovation

To encourage and nurture innovation and creativity and to create a culture which embraces change.

Intellectual Freedom

To guarantee, facilitate and defend the right of library users to freedom of thought, belief, opinion and expression as the basis of a democratic society. To defend the right of library users to access all expressions of knowledge and intellectual activity.

Accountability

To meet the library service needs of the community in an efficient, effective and fiscally responsible manner.

The Strategic Plan

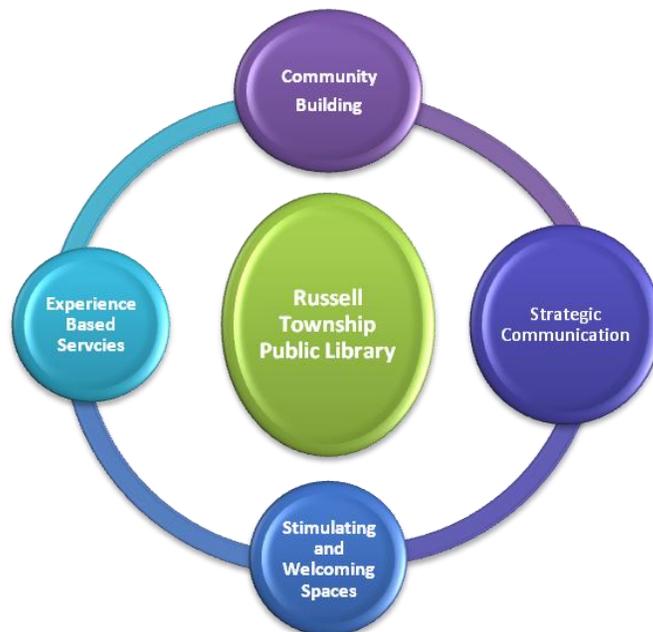


During the next five years, the Library will focus on four key strategic pillars:

- The community builds the Library – the Library builds the community
- Experience-based services
- Strategic communication
- Stimulating and welcoming spaces.

Specific actions have been identified to implement each strategic pillar. These actions will be further developed in the Library's annual action plans, budgets, staffing priorities and management activities. The Strategic Plan is a guiding document and a point of reference for these ongoing operational responsibilities.

These strategies do not describe all that the Library must do in the next five years; they describe instead the four key areas where the Library must chart a new course and embark on new directions to continue to respond to community needs. The Library will pursue these new directions but will also continue to improve and expand the services that residents currently enjoy. We are also committed to pursuing our future in partnership with the community and we will collaborate and support but not duplicate the efforts of our community partners.



THE COMMUNITY BUILDS THE LIBRARY THE LIBRARY BUILDS THE COMMUNITY



The Library will help to build strong networks that support the unique social, cultural and linguistic character of the community. The Library will address the diverse needs and expectations of residents, support the efforts of local organizations and businesses, and actively engage in partnerships that benefit the community. The community will also be invited to participate in the development and delivery of new services; residents will be a driving force in building a library which remains relevant to their lives.

To implement this strategy, the Library will:

- 1. Lead an initiative to welcome new residents to the community.**
- 2. Identify a strategy to enhance and expand its role as a community information centre.**
The Library will further define its community information role and improve access to current information on community organizations, resources, and events.
- 3. Expand its involvement in the creation and showcasing of community content.**
The Library is in a unique position to tell and showcase the community's story. In partnership with local organizations, the Library will celebrate the unique cultural and social resources of the community, create a public repository for information created by community organizations, showcase residents who are making a significant contribution to society, and chronicle the Township's history.
- 4. Facilitate community-driven programming**
The Library will provide space to support programming designed and delivered by the community, and facilitate access to the technology and training residents require to advance their initiatives.
- 5. Develop stronger relationships with the local business community and support the Township's economic development strategy.**
The Library will work with local businesses to provide information and expertise that support their interests and with the Municipality to support the implementation of its economic development strategy.

EXPERIENCE-BASED SERVICES



Public libraries everywhere are managing a transition from services that are entirely print-based and a role as “keepers of content” to a universe where their role is to link individuals to new experiences rooted in creativity, innovation and technology. Libraries are no longer just a place where knowledge is accessed but where it can be created, understood, and shared. As a dynamic and animated public space, the Library will offer a great variety of new programs and activities giving residents an opportunity to meet, learn, perform, collaborate and share their interests and passions.

To implement this strategy the Library will:

1. Prepare a service audit.

To gradually move its focus to experience-based services, the Library will prepare an audit of current services by evaluating the relative emphasis of print and digital in its collections, analyzing how collections and resources are currently used, studying user and non-user profiles and exploring the community’s interest in new and expanded experience-based services.

2. Undertake a skill and competency audit.

The Library will identify the skill sets available among library staff and community resources to better understand its capacity to introduce new services and will then work with staff and the community to enhance these skills as required.

3. Prepare a strategy to expand experience-based programming.

Based on the results of the service and skill/competency audits, the Library will prepare a strategy to enhance experience-based programming by identifying desired programs/activities and potential community partners, establishing priorities for program delivery and planning for the design of appropriate public spaces.

4. Develop a new service delivery/program model.

The Library will identify innovative approaches to make better use of emerging technologies in order to encourage interactivity and provide residents with opportunities to fully experience the new digital world, access more electronic resources, and develop their technical competencies.

STRATEGIC COMMUNICATIONS



Public libraries are changing in ways that are not always understood or appreciated by residents. The Library has a responsibility to improve communications and ensure its message is heard by the community. To accomplish this, the Library will develop a comprehensive marketing plan that will deal with the Library's ongoing communication with the public and other community partners & stakeholders as well as the marketing and branding of the Library.

To implement this strategy the Library will:

- 1. Network with community organizations to share information and facilitate joint efforts.**
The Library will strengthen existing relationships and build new partnerships and will ensure that the Library and community organizations are well aware of each others' mission, services and future plans. This network will encourage discussions that will lead to joint projects and partnerships for shared service delivery.
- 2. Prepare specific communication and marketing materials to target key sectors of the community.**
The Library will identify target markets for its programs and services and develop communication strategies and materials to more effectively communicate with non-users, community organizations, local businesses and primary partners, such as the education sector and the Municipality.
- 3. Undertake a re-branding exercise.**
The Library will undertake a re-branding exercise to review the perception of the library, the messaging surrounding the library, and current elements of the brand, such as the library logo and signage.
- 4. Develop an effective approach for ongoing liaison and communication with the Municipality.**
- 5. Explore innovative approaches to promoting programs and services**
Both on-site and online visitors will be better exposed to library products and services through techniques such as merchandising and effective signage. The Library will provide exciting and stimulating environments where users are encouraged to explore new products, ideas and services.
- 6. Improve the use of social communication media**
As part of its communications strategy, the Library will enhance the use of social media and digital services to communicate more effectively with residents.

STIMULATING AND WELCOMING SPACES



With modern, welcoming and well designed and equipped facilities and innovative technology the Library will have a strong community presence, both physically and virtually. While in the short term the Library must deal with the challenge of limited library space and a sub-standard facility in Embrun, the goal is to ensure that our physical and virtual spaces allow us to engage the community and accommodate the programs and activities that fulfill the Vision.

To implement this strategy the Library will:

- 1. Ensure all branches meet the commitment to bilingual services.**
The Library will examine the manner in which current collections and other services are distributed between branches and, as warranted, reallocate resources consistent with its commitment to provide bilingual services.
- 2. Develop a stronger and more dynamic on-line presence.**
The Library will improve its on-line presence and the access to its resources through more extensive and effective use of library electronic resources, the library website and other digital services.
- 3. Prepare a facility master plan.**
The library will conduct a space needs assessment to develop a long-range plan for library facilities. It will also identify a strategy for improving facilities for residents in the eastern part of the Township.